

## **Title**

Preston Bus Station: architectural history, politics and democracy in a post-World War II designation saga

### **Abstract**

This paper discusses the fifteen-year fight for the statutory heritage designation of the Central Bus Station and Car Park in Preston, Lancashire, England, a case that has become known internationally as a landmark of post-WWII heritage. It focuses on the role of democratic politics within architectural heritage by examining the opposing roles played by those holding official elected positions and by members of the general public engaging in direct democracy. The discussion elaborates on how research in architectural history took on an “insurgent” political role; supporting the formal expert position and managing by public participation to overturn official heritage policy. The paper situates the case study within the broader critical development of architectural history and heritage studies and argues that criticality has infiltrated practices in both areas and their interactions. It also argues that social and cultural practices in architectural heritage are ever-changing and that “democratic” approaches appear in various guises that require close scrutiny and constant updates. Although the geographical location of the building is outside the Asia-Pacific region, the issues dealt with here often relate to modern architecture around the globe.

### **Introduction**

The Central Bus Station and Car Park in Preston, Lancashire, England, is a purpose-built complex completed in 1969, subsequently referred to as Preston Bus Station (PBS). Widely described as Brutalist, an idiom of late modernist architecture predominantly from the 1960s, the building is famous for its imposing dimensions – about 170 m long by 40 m wide – and the “upwardly sweeping ends of [its] cantilevered parking decks.”<sup>1</sup> It was the subject of both pro-active thematic surveys and designation selection guides by the English Government’s expert advisors on the historic environment (initially, Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England

(RCHME), and then English Heritage (EH)<sup>2</sup>) and re-active responses to threats of demolition (“spot-listing” applications), and was repeatedly evaluated as fulfilling the criteria for national designation and statutory heritage protection. Nonetheless, the building was twice turned down for listing by the Secretary of State in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) who is responsible for the final decision on national designation matters: first in 2001 and again in 2010. Even the successful third listing attempt submitted in 2012 faced fierce opposition from the local authority, Preston City Council (PCC), who were also the owners and custodians of PBS. By contrast, numerous members of the general public sided with the official expert position and supported the retention of the building.<sup>3</sup> Reflecting the importance of this public role, the group behind the principal online campaign “Save Preston Bus Station” won a national award, the Heritage Alliance’s 2014 Heritage Heroes Award.<sup>4</sup>

The controversies behind the building’s plight became internationally known. Its inclusion in the World Monuments Fund 2012 Watch List<sup>5</sup> and a presentation in an international ICOMOS conference in Chandigarh, India, in October 2013, were just two instances of its international status.<sup>6</sup> What is more, although the geographical location of the building is outside the Asia-Pacific region, the issues considered here often relate to modern architecture around the globe.

The formalised processes of heritage protection applied in the case, including the direct involvement of architectural history findings as part of heritage evaluation, suggest a conventional approach that was based on factual accuracy and authoritative expert judgments. However, a closer analysis of the case throws light on critical advances in architectural history and in heritage studies that have infiltrated those seemingly inflexible approaches and mark considerable and often parallel signs of evolution, albeit usually hazy. The first author’s direct involvement in the case – initially as case officer for the Twentieth Century Society<sup>7</sup> and subsequently as an academic researcher and author of the final listing application – has triggered the analysis presented here, as an attempt to apprehend and explain the various factors at work.

Although two distinct disciplines, history and heritage clearly share a great deal of common ground in their principal focus on the past, its relation to the present and, quite often, aspirations for the future too. Jessica Moody points to an initial distinction between the two fields as she relates “history” to the study of the past and “heritage” to “a process of what is *done* with the past” (emphasis in the original). Yet, she immediately also highlights their shared ground, as she adds that such an interpretation makes the study of the past a “useful constitutive part” of heritage and historians “social actors within the process of heritage”.<sup>8</sup> Such a close relationship is also apparent between architectural history and architectural heritage. For instance, as the two fields emerged, they were both defined by close connections to buildings as the primary traces of the past they studied, further supported by archives and other written or visual evidence. In this sense, certain parallels to art history and archaeology have been drawn at times, especially within an empirical tradition in architectural history or the practices of architectural heritage.<sup>9</sup>

From those early beginnings, connections to broader cultural and social values have long been emphasised. As a result, chronological, geographical or monographic approaches that focused solely on surveys of the work of architects, based on aesthetic, functional and technical characteristics, have been challenged as “internalised concerns.”<sup>10</sup> Such an expansion of the scope of history and heritage bears direct political connotations, via their dependence on aesthetics, function, or chronology which, in turn, relate to social structures of power and, consequently, demarcate dominant and marginal cultures.<sup>11</sup>

Further expansion of both fields took place, mainly from the 1960s onwards, and largely influenced by critical scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. Challenges to misconceptions of factual objectivity and to the roles of authors and audiences relativized knowledge<sup>12</sup> and posed the key questions of “whose history?”<sup>13</sup> or “whose heritage?”<sup>14</sup> The resultant variations of narratives invited comparisons between the two fields and related these to certain types of “democratisation.” Early architectural guidebooks have been interpreted as a mode of democratisation of the appreciation of architecture. Of course, this was still largely a top-down approach – “part of the

cultural operation of buying into a certain social class” – that seemed to accept the authoritative, and often openly subjective, voice of an expert author.<sup>15</sup> Yet, in certain cases, readers were encouraged to think for themselves.<sup>16</sup> This expert role has been even more authoritative in the area of institutionalised and formalised heritage – most often aiming to define national identities, or even universal values of humankind,<sup>17</sup> as in Laurajane Smith’s influential concept of the “Authorised Heritage Discourse” (AHD).<sup>18</sup> Authority is strongly underlined by the public erasure of the author’s name, usually designated as a “Historic Buildings Inspector,” with their personal identity hidden behind the title of an impersonal official organisation, such as Historic England. Nonetheless, here too, a form of democratisation similar to that offered by architectural guidebooks in the long eighteenth century has taken place as official heritage lists – previously only available to heritage professionals – have been made accessible to the general public.<sup>19</sup>

A different, “holistic” expansion of the scope of the two fields “weav[es] together aesthetic, structural, theoretical, visual and experiential factors,”<sup>20</sup> or recognises emotional connections as valid considerations.<sup>21</sup> A broader and more nuanced inclusivity - beyond mere acceptance of the relevance of the two fields to everyone<sup>22</sup> - has also been extensively discussed as both fields opened up to aspects of real and multiple identities that may have been previously forgotten, excluded, or suppressed.<sup>23</sup> Reframing the questions that needed to be explored - by using new categories of analysis – has been one of the developments from the engagement of architectural history with critical theory.<sup>24</sup> Similar explorations have taken place in the field of critical heritage studies and expanded into heritage charters, conventions and policies that link heritage to the notion of citizenship and its role in “the construction of a peaceful and democratic society,”<sup>25</sup> or even directly transfer powers to citizens and enhanced participation within policy and decision-making.<sup>26</sup>

Although the application of such positions is less straightforward, as actual practice often remains top-down, certain developments can be discerned which demonstrate genuine advances and allow for optimism.

Following a brief introduction to some basic facts of the building's architectural history, the paper presents the circumstances and key events marking the fifteen-year fight for its retention and statutory designation. The discussion then focuses on four aspects of the multifaceted relations between architecture, heritage and history through the particular angle of politics. Firstly, the discussion addresses the distinction between traditionalist and modern heritage and perceived hierarchies of aesthetics and style, temporal distance, and utility, as have been identified in various studies of the development of architectural history and heritage.<sup>27</sup> Marked advances in recent years as regards the wider acceptance of post-WWII architecture are also addressed.<sup>28</sup> Secondly, the role of democratic politics, as illustrated by the PBS case, is scrutinised. The paper examines the distinct roles played by a range of democratic players with a formal or informal role in the field of heritage: members of the general public, the architectural profession, heritage experts, and democratically elected politicians at local and national levels. Thirdly, we consider the role of architectural history and alternative narratives leading those who supported the retention of the building. Although it was mainly architectural history that provided experts with the principal arguments for the designation case, such arguments often left lay supporters indifferent – as they introduced alternative approaches to heritage, based on personal experiences, emotional attachment, or popular culture – or were repeatedly brushed aside by politicians who had the final word on the case. Finally, the paper demonstrates how research in architectural history in the PBS case provided the crucial tool via which political games were turned on their head and this effectively allowed the remodelling of history into an active power in the current formation of the built environment.

### **Identification and background**

[Fig. 1]

Designed to accommodate eighty double-decker buses and 1,100 cars, PBS is located at the heart of Preston city centre, strategically close to the city's Ring Road with direct links to the broader motorway network. The complex has played a key role in Preston's recent history and in the

development of motor transport in England: the first section of England's motorway network was opened in 1958 as the Preston by-pass.<sup>29</sup>

An initial commission in 1959 for a combined car park and bus station, from what was then the architectural firm of Grenfell-Baines and Hargreaves, proved inadequate for the rapidly increasing road traffic volumes and the needs of Preston. In the final commission, Preston Corporation handed the scheme to Keith Ingham and Charles Wilson of Building Design Partnership (BDP) which had evolved out of the firm of Grenfell-Bairnes and Hargreaves. Ingham was to be the actual designer of the realised scheme. The consulting structural engineers were Ove Arup and Partners and E. H. Stazicker was involved as the borough engineer and surveyor.<sup>30</sup>

### **Threat of demolition**

The Bus Station sits in the middle of a redevelopment site which Preston City Council acquired by compulsory purchase in the 1960s. The site was for a long period part of the Tithebarn Regeneration scheme that emerged in 2000.<sup>31</sup> This was a multi-million pound town centre redevelopment plan by private developers Grosvenor that promised “thousands of new jobs for Preston”<sup>32</sup> but also envisaged demolition of PBS and various other buildings.<sup>33</sup> The development agreement was signed by April 2005 but was never realised. In July 2011 the Tithebarn Regeneration contract expired, before any works had started, and four months later, in November 2011, the anchor retailer pulled out.

Nonetheless, even without a specific replacement plan, and despite current environmental considerations dictating the re-use of existing building stock, on 7 December 2012 PCC voted, in principle, to have PBS demolished. The principal arguments against the retention of the building were that it operated below its capacity and its running and maintenance costs were too high.

This renewed threat to the building prompted a third listing application that was totally unexpected. On the knowledge of formal heritage procedures, the City Council assumed the building had missed all opportunities to become listed. Yet, unknown to the council, new architectural history research had been conducted which, as we shall see, was used to overturn that assumption. Political change

at national level helped too. A new Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries (the Conservative MP, Ed Vaizey), brought with him no personal prejudice against modern architecture.

### **Architectural history research and initial heritage evaluation**

The repeated attempts to have the building placed under statutory protection first started in 1998. These were firmly supported by EH who conducted the expert evaluation of the building, mainly assessing facts based on architectural history research, and tested their findings against the Statutory Criteria for Listing and the Listing Selection Guide for Transport Buildings. On two previous occasions EH's recommendation for listing had been turned down by the then Secretary of State in DCMS. This was in line with formal processes, strictly interpreted, yet it is usually only in controversial cases that a Minister would reject EH's advice.

The first listing attempt for PBS started as part of the RCHME's "English Heritage Post-1939 Listing Programme" that was conducted in the late 1990s. PBS was identified as a possible new listing case under RCHME's thematic survey of "Road Transport Buildings."<sup>34</sup> The emergence of the Tithebarn Regeneration scheme set the listing process into full motion. What had started as PBS's inclusion in a list of potential new listings (what constitutes, effectively, a "Tentative List") was taken forward for full evaluation by EH who recommended listing at Grade II. However, DCMS turned down EH's recommendation. Their negative decision was withheld despite a review request<sup>35</sup> – based on a legal probe and allegations of conflicts of interest involving two key figures who had met the former minister<sup>36</sup> - and by late 2001 the listing case was closed.<sup>37</sup>

Seven years later the Twentieth Century Society took advantage of the possibility to re-open a listing case after five years, prepared a new listing application for the building – largely based on the same research used in the first recommendation - and submitted this to EH in January 2009. Although any member of the public can submit a listing application to EH, i.e. recommend a building for assessment for listing, it is noteworthy that in this case – for the second time – it was a heritage organisation that was taking the lead in support of PBS's retention and protection. The

Twentieth Century Society holds a statutory role in the planning system. It receives an annual grant from EH and, in return for this, provides advice to Local Planning Authorities on Listed Building Consent applications concerning post-1914 buildings.<sup>38</sup>

The second listing attempt, again, was highly controversial. EH repeated its recommendation for listing at Grade II in December 2009,<sup>39</sup> the Secretary of State turned down the recommendation in January 2010<sup>40</sup> and the Twentieth Century Society requested a listing decision review in March 2010.<sup>41</sup> Over a year later, in April 2011, DCMS ruled that the decision not to list was correctly made and there were not sufficient grounds for a review.<sup>42</sup>

### **Retention attempts outside the heritage protection system**

The Minister's decision had to be accepted as the last word on statutory heritage designation.

However, as the Tithebarn Regeneration scheme collapsed and the economic climate was no longer conducive to large redevelopment projects, the proposed demolition and replacement of the building became less of an imminent threat and conservationists' efforts were re-directed. Rather than focusing on recognition of the building as a heritage asset of national significance, the new approach looked into changing PCC's perception of the building from that of a "problem" to that of an "asset" to the city.

The Twentieth Century Society continuously stressed to PCC that the retention of the building could be an opportunity for an improved regeneration scheme and, coincidentally, on the same day that the collapse of the Tithebarn Regeneration scheme was announced in the local press, the short list for the RIBA Stirling Prize 2011 was also announced. Two of the shortlisted schemes were refurbished buildings (one listed, the other not listed) and the Society urged PCC to recognise in those examples the full potential of PBS.<sup>43</sup>

On a similar line, in November 2011, the withdrawal of the anchor retailer for the Tithebarn scheme followed the announcement, a month earlier, of the inclusion of PBS in the World Monuments Fund's (WMF) 2012 Watch List. The building had been nominated by the Twentieth Century Society in March 2011, as a representative of "British Brutalism".<sup>44</sup> In this context, the Society



urged PCC to see an opportunity in those difficult circumstances and, indeed, the local Council opened up – at least for a short while – to the idea of exploring alternative options for the building's future. In December 2011 PCC Leader Councillor Peter Rankin announced that he hoped to organise a meeting for people interested in the bus station.<sup>45</sup> Despite this glimpse of hope, in February 2012, the Council voted against a proposition for a referendum on the future of the building. A single independent Councillor opposed the decision. The proposition had been brought forward by local campaigner, John Wilson, who petitioned to have the future of the Bus Station discussed in full council.<sup>46</sup>

A return to a more positive approach was to take place in July 2012 when the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), based in Preston, organised a symposium on the theme of *Revisiting Utopia: Modernist Architecture in the Post-regenerate City*, and used PBS as their principal case study. Representatives of PCC and Lancashire County Council (LCC) as well as the Twentieth Century Society were invited to take part in a panel discussion and an art exhibition was organised in the former Preston Post Office – one of numerous art projects inspired by the building.<sup>47</sup>

### **Support from the architectural world and the general public**

The Minister's rejection of the second listing recommendation and PCC's persistent refusal to explore re-use options for PBS – in stark contrast to the firm position of heritage experts – also boosted a continuously growing movement within the architectural world and the general public that supported the retention of the building.

Both British and non-British architects of international fame expressed their appreciation of the building. Rem Koolhaas praised the building on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme in 2012,<sup>48</sup> whereas the following year Lord Rogers (the architect Richard Rogers) expressed his support for the retention of the building.<sup>49</sup> The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), too, became increasingly vocal on the case. In addition to his interview with Ed Vaizey,<sup>50</sup> Hugh Pearman, *RIBA Journal* editor and author of a book to mark BDP's fiftieth anniversary,<sup>51</sup> wrote again in March 2013 an article on PBS,<sup>52</sup> and Angela Brady and Stephen Hodder (at the time RIBA President and

RIBA President Elect respectively) were strongly supportive of the listing and retention case.<sup>53</sup> A number of architecture academics were also strong proponents of the building's value and its retention. In addition to UCLan's 2012 symposium, an initiative under the title "Gate81" gained momentum at the final stage of the fifteen-year campaign, in the course of 2013.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to the architectural and local press, the case repeatedly featured in the national press and television.<sup>55</sup> Most notably, PBS was chosen as the site for public participation in BBC1's principal Easter production in April 2012 (*Preston Passion*) – a programme that strongly manifested the potential of the building for a continuing public role in Preston's city centre.<sup>56</sup>

Even more remarkable in this story remains the public appreciation of the building, repeatedly voiced both locally and nationwide. A poll conducted by the *Lancashire Evening Post (LEP)* on 15 August 2000 had revealed that a majority of 57% of readers wanted the bus station to be given listed building status.<sup>57</sup> Ten years later, on 17 May 2010, in yet another poll by *LEP* the Bus Station was voted the "city's favourite building."<sup>58</sup> During the latest phase of the listing "saga", in January 2013 a new poll by *LEP* re-affirmed that 70% of Prestonians back the retention of the building – although they were of course concerned about what the cost for this may be.<sup>59</sup> Finally, a number of grassroots initiatives appeared in support of the building. There was a lively social media campaign, with the Facebook page "Save Preston Bus Station" as its principal reference point, as formally recognised by the 2014 Heroes Award.<sup>60</sup> The building also inspired numerous art projects<sup>61</sup> and in December 2012 was second in BDP's online *Placebook*, in which the public were invited to vote for their favourite BDP building.<sup>62</sup>

### **New architectural history research and third listing application**

[Fig. 2]

Alongside the grassroots activism and those initiatives from the architectural profession and academy, conservationists were also developing a new approach that aimed to enhance the knowledge base for the building's significance. During the positive climate in the summer of 2012, following the *Preston Passion* programme and UCLan's symposium, a research proposal was

submitted to the *RIBA Research Awards 2012*.<sup>63</sup> Although the proposal was short-listed, it did not make it to the final list of winners.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, the first part of the proposed project was carried out and new material was collected from the BDP company archive in London. It was this research that was to bring about one of the most remarkable upsets in contemporary political intervention in the field of heritage in England (ironically from a “failed” research bid).

The new material from the BDP archive brought to light an aspect of PBS which had hitherto been overlooked, that is, the use of Glass-Reinforced Polyester (GRP). The familiar image of PBS, strongly associated with extensive use of reinforced concrete, had to be seen in new light: as the result of the combined use of “Concrete and GRP,” as a BDP pamphlet was distinctively labelled.<sup>65</sup> Although the use of GRP for concrete moulds in the building industry was not a new development, the extent to which this was used in PBS and the way in which its use played a key role in the creation of its distinctive elevation were not negligible. GRP was also extensively used for a number of features in PBS that are considered representative of BDP’s integrated approach to design, such as signage and fittings.<sup>66</sup> The legacy of some of the products made of GRP that had been designed specifically for PBS was to last. Specifically, Glasdon Ltd, the manufacturers of GRP for PBS, were to use the design for the car park pay kiosks as prototype for a new production line for a prefabricated sectional system which was subsequently marketed under the name “Europa Kiosk systems” and attracted considerable attention in the architectural and technical press in the early 1970s.<sup>67</sup> In addition, despite its fairly established use internationally, the use of GRP in the British construction industry was fairly limited and “lagging behind.”<sup>68</sup> Seen in their totality, the new findings were deemed to address an aspect of the building that had not been considered in earlier assessments of its special architectural interest, that is, technological innovation.

Following the surprise announcement in December 2012 of a PCC vote to have PBS demolished and replaced,<sup>69</sup> this previously unknown research material was used for a third listing application, written by this paper’s first author on behalf of the Twentieth Century Society and submitted to EH on 27 December 2012.<sup>70</sup> Although at least five years would normally be required to have passed

before a listing case could be re-opened, EH recognised the potential significance of this new information and on 30 January 2013 confirmed that they would re-open the case, less than two years from the final decision on the second review request, stressing that this was “an exceptionally unusual case.”<sup>71</sup> Indeed, queried about the building’s non-designated status in November 2012 – just a few days before the latest threat to the building was announced by PCC and two months before the case was re-opened by EH – the new Minister Ed Vaizey had commented that the case was “unlikely to come up for listing any time soon” as it had been recently closed.<sup>72</sup> By 28 February 2013, EH prepared their consultation report and circulated this to the applicants and the building’s owners.<sup>73</sup> An extension to the consultation period was requested by PCC and, on 12 April 2013, it was announced that an application for a Certificate of Immunity from listing (COI) – submitted by PCC, as could be presumed and was subsequently confirmed – was to be considered in parallel to the listing application.<sup>74</sup> The final decision was announced on 23 September 2013 and placed the building under statutory protection at Grade II.<sup>75</sup>

## **Discussion**

The heritage evaluation case of PBS underlines several issues relating to the intersections between architecture, heritage and politics, as well as various aspects of associated dominant and neglected cultural practices and how the dividing lines between these are continuously shifting. Two particular angles are examined here.

Firstly, the building’s age – dating from the post-WWII period and, in particular, the late 1960s – and also its purpose and typology – as a predominantly utilitarian transport building – played a significant role in the challenges posed to PBS. These attributes place the building within a neglected position in comparison to traditionalist views and practices in architecture, as architectural history and heritage that had long privileged more established stylistic expressions and more grandiose purposes, or, more generally, older periods. This dividing line between over- and under-represented areas clearly suggests deep political undertones in both architecture and heritage. The discussion here focuses on how this line has been gradually moving as architectural

historiography and heritage principles and practices advance and provide a wider and deeper knowledge base for the architectural production of our more recent past. The PBS case serves to demonstrate several of these developments and how they affect both experts' positions and those of the general public.

Secondly, a more literal association with politics, and more specifically with democracy, is discussed in relation to controversies within normative practices and negotiations of diversity and dissent, as revealed by the wide range of stakeholders that actively participated in the evaluation case of PBS and their interactions, alliances and oppositions. These vary from officially assigned roles – such as those of the Secretary of State and of heritage experts, two stakeholders that one would expect to represent the same dominant practice prescribed by the sovereign heritage framework – to spontaneous expressions of individuals and groups who voice unauthorised arguments.

#### **a. Post-war heritage, popular culture and public participation**

The designation history of PBS constitutes a key example of an increasingly expanding phenomenon where members of the general public take an active role in favour of modern architecture, despite the initial marginalisation of twentieth-century architecture from the dominant heritage discourse. What is more, public participation in the PBS campaign did not simply follow the official line of heritage experts but branched out to alternative approaches that expressed additional positions about the significance of the building.

The rift between traditionalist attitudes and post-war modern architecture in Britain has a long history. This was memorably encapsulated in the speech delivered by Prince Charles at the Royal Institute of British Architects' 150th anniversary in 1984, in which he referred to the proposed extension to the National Gallery designed by Ahrends Burton Koralek as a “carbuncle.”<sup>76</sup> Admittedly, Prince Charles's opinion was voiced more than three decades ago and temporally too close to the scheme it criticised. Nonetheless, it does exemplify how, over a number of years, various senior political figures – not just the Ministers involved in the PBS case - used their

position, or prestige, against modern architecture. Such derisive opinions became interwoven in heritage policy, as is discussed by Bob Kindred in his introduction to a collection of essays written by heritage experts specialising in twentieth-century heritage.<sup>77</sup> Although this volume presents several progressive advances in professional attitudes, Kindred's critical review of the British public's participation in architectural conservation suggests that the overriding political climate retained the ability to heavily influence the views of the general public.<sup>78</sup> He tracks this association between policy and involvement back to the 1990s, when Government ministers showed reluctance to designate modern buildings' heritage status following a number of surveys conducted by English Heritage which, according to Kindred, culminated in a lack of "sophisticated debate"<sup>79</sup> in the UK. Kindred's claim is supported by Geoff Rich in an article that interprets the lack of public empathy for the conservation of modern architecture as the result of strong prejudices against the style. He sees the roots of such prejudices in the social climate in which the buildings were constructed, and thus symbolise, and in the resulting poor environmental performance of often cheap and rapid-build processes.<sup>80</sup>

The situation presented by Kindred and Rich is indeed one side of the story; yet, attitudes have been changing. Recent publications depict the rising popularity of post-WWII architecture and also point to the role of online media, public engagement and participation in heritage disputes since the start of the millennium - one example being Owen Hopkins's *Lost Futures*, with special reference to Brutalism.<sup>81</sup>

The continuously increasing distance from the time modern architecture was created as well as the resulting enlarged knowledge base are two of the most obvious reasons for such changing attitudes. Yet, the motivation for, and justification of, public participation in support of modern heritage can vary widely and, indeed, the supporters of PBS came from various angles. For some supporters, architectural appreciation and interest in architectural history were the underlying factors for their involvement. Indeed, by the time the third listing application for PBS was submitted in December 2012 and the evaluation of the building re-started, a much-enlarged knowledge base for motor

transport architecture<sup>82</sup> and Brutalism<sup>83</sup> was available. Members of the public with an interest in such developments supported the retention of PBS by aligning themselves with the official heritage expert position. However, other supporters of the building maintained that their interest was not in the building's architectural history, nor in its heritage significance, but rather in its value as a public asset, in its potential – either functional or artistic, or in some personal association.

Several studies have ascribed the tension between the assumptions of “elite” traditionalists and the general public to the influence that popular culture may have on the latter group's positions. Kindred concludes his introduction by suggesting that a more proactive “populist debate”<sup>84</sup> could increase the number of modern heritage formal designations. In their paper “Mass, Modern, and Mine: Heritage and Popular Culture,”<sup>85</sup> Mike Robinson and Helaine Silverman assert the potential advantages from such an interface between cultural heritage and popular culture, although these remain a distinct, under-researched area of study that has the potential for further exploration and development.

[Fig. 3]

Increased public participation based on emotions and personal attachment, alongside rational thinking, marks yet another shift between previously dominant and marginal epistemological approaches in the heritage discourse. For instance, in his article “‘Thinkers and Feelers’: A Psychological Perspective on Heritage and Society,” John Schofield analyses the consequences of the 2005 “Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society,” commonly referred to as the Faro Convention, which emphasised the importance of democratic participation in cultural heritage processes – at an individual and at a collective level.<sup>86</sup> He uses the application of Carl Jung's theory of psychological types, with specific reference to the notion of the “Feeler” and the “Thinker,”<sup>87</sup> and proposes that the public engagement encouraged by the Faro Convention will breed a generation of “Feelers” in an industry dominated by “Thinkers,” thus transforming what was previously black and white into a grey area.<sup>88</sup>

Broader theorisation of such shifts or tensions regarding the definition of heritage and its stakeholders has featured in related scholarship. In Smith's discussion of AHD as an overriding dominant view to heritage in the Western world, the imagined "elite" prescribes what would be reflected as cultural heritage, dismissing community-led feelings of memory and identity and leading to her provocative view that "[t]here is, really, no such thing as heritage."<sup>89</sup> Her book *The Uses of Heritage*, and specifically the concept of AHD, has influenced a number of scholars who contemplate this notion of privilege but have attempted to record subsequent changes made to heritage discussion, especially in light of the 2005 Faro Convention. Emma Waterton provides a scathing review of the traditional representations of policy followed in the UK as she posits that to propose everyone should prescribe to "an elite, class-based and white vision of heritage is to take unwarranted liberties with many peoples' sense of identity, place and belonging."<sup>90</sup> While this view is supportive of Smith's concept, it presumes a more static view of heritage compared to Robinson and Silverman who, in relation to democratic heritage and its link to popular culture, also suggest that the AHD is actually beginning to transform in the "context of global financial instability."<sup>91</sup> They contend that the sudden decrease in public spending has been the catalyst for the rise of bottom-up methods when it comes to heritage protection, as public protest surrounding threatened heritage becomes more commonplace.<sup>92</sup>

Such a challenge to the authoritative dominance of top-down and centralised heritage frameworks is a complex political phenomenon, as John Pendlebury discusses. Pendlebury highlights the social potential driving change, noting the re-emerging social discussion surrounding heritage protection which, he claims, "laid dormant" since the 1970s.<sup>93</sup> However, he also warns that regulatory principles of policy must remain unchanged in this quest for a more participatory approach. This appears to contradict the positions put forward by Schofield and by Robinson and Silverman which both suggest that social mobilisation has the potential to generate a more socially inclusive heritage framework. However, Pendlebury provides comprehensive reasoning for his assertion. He cautions against the localism agenda promoted by the British coalition government between the



Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats elected in 2010, as, he claims, this may be weakened by property sector opportunists who could diminish the conservation policies that have been so hard fought for nationally.<sup>94</sup> Pendlebury recognises the positive impact that the Localism Act 2011, which summed up the “commitment to enhancing participation within policy and decision-making and transferring powers to neighbourhoods and citizens,”<sup>95</sup> could have on creating a more participatory community.<sup>96</sup> However, he warns that removing control from what he describes as “cultural elites” does not instantly result in the shift of power downwards towards the community.<sup>97</sup> As lay participants in the PBS campaign worked in parallel to heritage experts and added to the official heritage debate, rather than introduce a rival position, the successful final outcome can be attributed to an enriched approach towards post-WWII heritage. The complementary voices spoken in the case of PBS – by heritage experts representing the official heritage framework and by members of the public with either an architectural or a personal interest in the building – could be seen as a successful example that unveils the positive potential of inclusive practices and a broadened heritage framework that respects acquired heritage expertise but also opens up to new possibilities.

**b. Political roles in heritage: digital social media, representative democracy pitfalls and “insurgent” architectural history<sup>98</sup>**

Variants of democratic participation can be discerned in the way heritage practice in England currently operates. As has become evident in the repeated rejections of EH’s recommendations for the listing of PBS, the role of the Secretary of State in DCMS is crucial in the implementation of national heritage designation principles. As an official position in representative democracy, this role of the Secretary of State clearly expresses the infiltration of democratic principles into the field of heritage. However, this also means that, alongside expert advice, there is a level of political intervention, as structures and sites are evaluated by heritage experts in EH, but the final decision lies with a political figure. In addition, in recent years, democratic principles within official heritage practices have been further expanded to incorporate formally a degree of direct democracy. Anyone

can put a building forward for consideration for designation, or access the national heritage list, and when a building comes under consideration for designation its owners are consulted.

At the same time, grassroots activism or public participation constitute additional expressions of direct democracy whether outside or inside the official heritage framework. Referring here to “public participation,” rather than “community participation,” has been a conscious choice, as the use of online digital media has markedly changed the traditional association of “community” with physical proximity. Hopkins associates the increased admiration to post-WWII architecture with the rise of social media platforms,<sup>99</sup> where images and campaigns are spread rapidly and this fast-paced dissemination brings about a new type of social cohesion. Indeed, although the public campaign for PBS was not exclusively online, the use of digital media served as the key communication channel that brought together independent contributors, enabled them to express an uncensored voice, and added momentum to the campaign. Independently from any official organisation, a Facebook page under the title “Save Preston Bus Station” served as the focal point for the grassroots support to the building. Reflecting the importance of the support to the case by the general public – as well as the overall importance of the final positive outcome of the listing case – it was the group behind this online presence that won the Heritage Alliance’s 2014 Heritage Heroes Award in recognition of its outstanding volunteer contributions to heritage.

Research charting the impact of social media on our perception of cultural heritage is sparse. Elisa Giaccardi outlines the shifting boundaries between what is classed as official and unofficial heritage, predicting that social media will give rise to more community-based manifestations of heritage protection.<sup>100</sup> Her point is supported by Charles Leadbeater who describes the power of social media to transform the traditional roles of our “stakeholders” by eroding the “boundaries between amateur and professional, consumer and producer [and] grassroots and mainstream.”<sup>101</sup> Leadbeater’s contribution additionally denotes the creation of a new “community,” and the transformative quality of digital culture in creating a culture of “engagers” as opposed to

“spectators,” and the resulting potential for even more increased levels of political and civic participation.<sup>102</sup>

[Fig. 4]

At the opposite end of the direct expression of individual opinions via social media, and despite being formally enshrined in the official heritage system, the role of democratically elected representatives in the evaluation case of PBS has been highly controversial. One crucial question that can be posed is whether their official position should be allowed to be swayed by personal preferences about what constitutes heritage and therefore deserves protection. In the PBS case, Margaret Hodge, the Minister of State who rejected the second listing recommendation, has been known for her “public disdain for 20th century architecture.”<sup>103</sup> Conversely, the election of a new democratic representative, who was not hostile towards modern architecture, enabled the change to the official status of the building without any revisions of the heritage framework.

It is in this same context that the role of new architectural history research was quite remarkable. Following the renewed threat to the building in December 2012, the research material that had been unearthed from the BDP archive was put into use with a political undertone. A process that is usually part of the dominant heritage culture of the nation took in this instance an insurgent role. The new material allowed for the same political system that had so far failed the building and its supporters to be used in their favour. Although insufficient in its own right to justify the listing of the building, the new information about the history of the building was adequately significant for the case to be re-opened - in less than two years from the final conclusion of the previous listing attempt - and the initial evaluation that had been first drafted fifteen years earlier was at long last endorsed.

Finally, the role of democratically elected officials again comes into question when heritage evaluation and taste are dealt with as areas included in local democratic representation, as PCC Leader Councillor Peter Rankin appears to suggest in a radio interview following the inclusion of PBS in the World Monuments Fund Watch List. When asked to back his claim that laymen do not

like concrete buildings, despite a vote in a local newspaper naming Preston Bus Station as the city's favourite building,<sup>104</sup> his response pointed to a vote in PCC: "I can tell you that all three political parties on PCC supported demolition and there may be one or two Councillors who do think it's worth saving, but not many."<sup>105</sup>

The controversy here further expands to aspects of direct democracy. PCC were the owners of the building, and therefore officially consulted as part of the official heritage evaluation process. Yet, these were the same elected representatives of the public who had been pursuing its demolition and replacement, presenting this as the only feasible option and defying both expert and public opinion about the building's architectural merit. What is more, PCC maintained their inflexible approach and refused to look into options of retention. There is no doubt about the severity of the financial challenges of a site of this scale, especially in the economic climate of the time that imposed a series of cuts in public funding.<sup>106</sup> Yet PCC did not provide evidence of a search for the best option for the future of PBS. PCC rejected an offer by a local businessman to buy PBS<sup>107</sup> and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to PCC, LCC, EH and DCMS by Wilson<sup>108</sup> - one of the principal figures behind the "Save Preston Bus Station" campaign - brought to light a series of largely questionable decisions made between PCC and LCC. For instance, it was revealed that an options appraisal report showing that retention would be the best long-term (yet most expensive) option for the city of Preston had been altered and was not presented for discussion by the council.<sup>109</sup> A number of EH-commissioned reports on the building's state of repair, and estimated refurbishment and upgrade costs, challenged the reports and figures presented by PCC.<sup>110</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The listing of PBS in September 2013 took fifteen years since the building was first included in RCHME's thematic survey in 1998, three listing attempts and substantial defiance from all who supported the building's retention. The celebratory mood following the listing of the building was reflected in the recognition of public contribution by the Heritage Alliance's 2014 Heritage Heroes Award that was won by the group behind the "Save Preston Bus Station" campaign.

Taking into consideration that this was a national designation at the lowest grade (Grade II), clearly it was the wider significance of the case that was recognised as a landmark in the field of heritage. The most obvious cause of celebration has been the resistance to the marginalisation of post-WWII architecture. The official position of heritage experts supporting the recognition and designation of PBS demonstrated the evolving nature of conservation principles and supporting architectural historiography, as well as the active, even insurgent, role that architectural history can take on in the current formation of the built environment. Additional causes for the distinctive position gained by the PBS case included an implicit criticism of the controversial practices employed by political voices that were authorised by the sovereign heritage framework; and, conversely, appreciation of the multiplicity of alternative voices by the general public.

The seemingly impersonal (“expert”) authorship and “accurate facts collection” methodological approach behind statutory heritage evaluation and designation alluded to an insulated and backward-looking continuation of a view of history and heritage with long-challenged claims to neutrality, objectivity and absolute knowledge. Yet, the diversity of alternative voices that supported the building enriched the heritage discourse by introducing new perspectives rooted in subjective, even emotive, readings of architecture and heritage. Read here as a form of direct democracy and complementing, or even aligning with, the position of heritage experts, rather than introducing a rivalry, they exemplified the potential for inclusive practices and a broadened heritage framework that did not reject acquired heritage expertise as it opened up to new possibilities and embraced expressions of direct democracy, either via new digital social media or via more conventional means.

In sum, the analysis of the PBS case demonstrates that this seeming “return” to earlier, limited perceptions of what history is, and how it can lead to the definition and identification of heritage too, was in fact informed by ongoing critical self-reflections, as is suggested by Andrew Leach’s discussion of a perceived “return to history.”<sup>11</sup> It is therefore argued that the PBS case offers an optimistic view which suggests that several decades of a critical discourse in both disciplines have

saturated architectural history and architectural heritage and the general direction of travel promises theoretically-enhanced practices. Such practices can keep on using archival evidence and physical traces of the past. But they do so in conversation with multiple and varied readings of the social, cultural and political scene and they relate to the present, not just the past, and to the future, however obscure and undefined these connections may be.<sup>112</sup> More broadly, this discussion of the PBS case study demonstrates the fluid landscape of architectural heritage and history, especially in relation to post-WWII modernism, and the omnipresent political undertones that take on various guises and therefore require precision and constant updates in their interpretation.

### **Authors' Curricula Vitae**

Dr Christina Malathouni is an architect and architectural historian. She holds a PhD in Architectural History from The Bartlett, UCL (UK), and is Lecturer at the School of Architecture, University of Liverpool (UK). She is full Member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (UK) and Associate Member of ICOMOS-ISC20C. She researched and wrote the third (successful) listing application for Preston Bus Station in December 2012, having been the Twentieth Century Society's case officer for the building until August 2012.

Janet Durkin is completing her RIBA Part 2 Master of Architecture at the School of Architecture, University of Liverpool (UK). Her dissertation researches community-led heritage and the impact of the digital age in the campaign to save Dunelm House, University of Durham (UK).

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Photograph by Christina Malathouni.

Figure 2. 2011. Central Bus Station and Car Park, Preston, Lancashire, England (exterior).

Photograph by Christina Malathouni.

Figure 3. 2011. Central Bus Station and Car Park, Preston, Lancashire, England (interior).

Photograph by Christina Malathouni.

Figure 4. 2011. Central Bus Station and Car Park, Preston, Lancashire, England (interior).

Photograph by Christina Malathouni.

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<sup>1</sup> Kathryn A. Morrison and John Minnis, *Carscapes: The Motor Car, Architecture, and Landscape in England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), as quoted in National Heritage List for England (NHLE), List entry Number: 1416042. Accessed September 18, 2017, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1416042>.

<sup>2</sup> The term “English Heritage” is used here for what is currently “Historic England.” Since this change of name came after the completion of the PBS listing case, the older term is used throughout this paper: “At the start of April 2015, English Heritage separated into two different bodies. A new charity retaining the name English Heritage now looks after the National Heritage Collection - the stone circles, great castles and abbeys, historic houses and all the other unique sites that were in English Heritage’s direct care... A newly named organisation called Historic England continues the statutory role of giving expert, constructive advice to owners, local authorities and the public, and championing the wider historic environment.” Accessed September 1, 2017, <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/about-us/search-news/english-heritage-has-changed>.

<sup>3</sup> Although the paper focuses on the public support for the building, it is paramount to acknowledge there has been strong opposition too and not just from political figures. See, for instance, Martin Baker, “Love, hate and concrete: The battle for Preston Bus Station,” *The Independent* (London), January 4, 2014. Accessed November 29, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/architecture/love-hate-and-concrete-the-battle-for-preston-bus-station-9035713.html>.

<sup>4</sup> “Save Preston Bus Station” were joint winners with “Howsham Mill”. “Heritage Heroes: Winners 2014,” The Heritage Alliance, accessed September 18, 2017, <http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/HHA-Winners-2014>.

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<sup>9</sup> Dana Arnold, *Reading Architectural History* (London: Routledge, 2002), 8-9; Andrew Leach, *What is Architectural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Iain Borden and Jane Rendell (eds), *InterSections: Architectural History and Critical Theory* (London, Routledge, 2000), 5.

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, the role of country houses in the early emergence of architectural history and the National Trust in England. (Arnold, *Reading Architectural History*, 8-9)

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<sup>13</sup> Moody, “Heritage and History,” 113-117.

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<sup>83</sup> See, for instance, the international symposium *Brutalism. Architecture of Everyday Culture, Poetry and Theory* held in Berlin (10-11 May 2012). Accessed September 24, 2017, <http://www.brutalismus.com/>.

<sup>84</sup> Kindred, "Introduction," 9.

<sup>85</sup> Mike Robinson and Helaine Silverman, "Mass, Modern, and Mine: Heritage and Popular Culture," in *Encounters with Popular Pasts: Cultural Heritage and Popular Culture*, ed. Mike Robinson and Helaine Silverman (New York: Springer, 2015), 7.

<sup>86</sup> The Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (2005).

<sup>87</sup> John Schofield, "'Thinkers and Feelers': A Psychological Perspective on Heritage and Society," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research*, ed. Steve Watson and Emma Waterton (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 422.

<sup>88</sup> Schofield, "'Thinkers and Feelers'," 422.

<sup>89</sup> Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 11.

<sup>90</sup> Emma Waterton, *Politics, Policy and the Discourses of Heritage in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1.

<sup>91</sup> Robinson and Silverman, "Mass, Modern, and Mine," 5.

<sup>92</sup> Robinson and Silverman, "Mass, Modern, and Mine," 3-5.

<sup>93</sup> John Pendlebury, *Conservation in the Age of Consensus* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 12.

<sup>94</sup> Pendlebury, "Heritage and Policy," 426.

<sup>95</sup> Pendlebury, "Heritage and Policy," 434.

<sup>96</sup> Pendlebury, "Heritage and Policy," 439.

<sup>97</sup> Pendlebury, "Heritage and Policy," 439.

<sup>98</sup> The use of the term "insurgent" in this study came up spontaneously, as a response to the details of the PBS case. The term has been used previously by other scholars with varied emphases. Of special interest, because of its direct association to "(planning) historiographies," is Leonie Sandercock's "Introduction: Framing Insurgent Historiographies" (in Leonie Sandercock (ed), *Making the Invisible Visible: A Multicultural Planning History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 1-34).

<sup>99</sup> Hopkins, *Lost Futures*, 22.

<sup>100</sup> Elisa Giaccardi, "Introduction: Reframing Heritage in a Participatory Culture," in *Heritage and Social Media*, ed. Elisa Giaccardi (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 4.

<sup>101</sup> Charles Leadbeater, *Cloud Culture* (London: Counterpoint, 2010), 46.

<sup>102</sup> Leadbeater, *Cloud Culture*, 77-79.

<sup>103</sup> Owen Hatherley, "Expert View: 'A Lost Vision of Public Modernism'," published as part of Maev Kennedy, "Milton Keynes shopping centre becomes Grade II listed", *The Guardian*, July 16, 2010. Accessed September 18, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/jul/16/milton-keynes-shopping-centre-grade-listed>. See also: Rowan Moore, "How Britain is Failing its Modernist Masterpieces," *The Observer* (London), May 29, 2011. Accessed July 28, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2011/may/29/modernist-architecture-demolished-listed-buildings>.

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<sup>104</sup> “Bus Station is City’s Favourite Building,” *Lancashire Evening Post*.

<sup>105</sup> PCC Leader Councillor Peter Rankin as interviewed at *Today*, BBC Radio 4’s long-running programme, on 6 October 2011, on the occasion of PBS’s inclusion in WMF’s 2012 Watch List. Accessed September 18, 2017, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid\\_9608000/9608792.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9608000/9608792.stm). Similar positions had been expressed by PCC Leader Councillor Ian Hall and Councillor Ken Hudson, leader of Preston’s Conservative group during the second listing attempt. See “Bus station ban lifted?” and “New look at ruling over bus station”.

<sup>106</sup> Wouter Vanstiphout, “Money, not Hand-wringing, Saves Buildings,” *Building Design* (London), December 21, 2012. Accessed July 8, 2013, <http://www.bdonline.co.uk/comment/money-not-hand-wringing-saves-buildings/5047997.article>; “‘Last Hope’ Plan for Preston Bus Station,” *Lancashire Evening Post*, January 22, 2013. Accessed July 10, 2013, <http://www.lep.co.uk/what-s-on/last-hope-plan-for-preston-bus-station-1-5339644>.

<sup>107</sup> David Rogers, “Decision on Millionaire’s Preston Bus Station Plans ‘Within Weeks’,” *Building Design* (London), March 12, 2013. Accessed July 16, 2013, <http://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/decision-on-millionaires-preston-bus-station-plans-within-weeks/5051637.article>; Mark Wilding, “Preston Councillors Set to Reject Offer to Save Bus Station,” *Building Design* (London), March 18, 2013. Accessed July 16, 2013, <http://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/preston-councillors-set-to-reject-offer-to-save-bus-station/5051930.article>.

<sup>108</sup> See “Correspondance between Lancashire County Council & Preston City Council in relation to Preston Bus Station & Associated land” and “Correspondence to English Heritage and the DCMS Re: Preston Bus Station & MSCP (January 2013 to April 26th 2013)” in website *WhatDoTheyKnow*. Accessed November 23, 2017, [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/correspondance\\_between\\_lancashir](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/correspondance_between_lancashir) and [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/correspondence\\_to\\_english\\_herita?utm\\_campaign=alaveteli-experiments-87&utm\\_content=sidebar\\_similar\\_requests&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_source=whatdotheyknow](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/correspondence_to_english_herita?utm_campaign=alaveteli-experiments-87&utm_content=sidebar_similar_requests&utm_medium=link&utm_source=whatdotheyknow).

<sup>109</sup> “Preston Bus Station Report was Altered,” *Lancashire Evening Post*, June 18, 2013. Accessed June 18, 2013, <http://www.lep.co.uk/news/business/preston-bus-station-report-was-altered-1-5777002>.

<sup>110</sup> “Restored Bus Station at Half the Price?,” *Lancashire Evening Post*, July 2, 2013. Accessed July 2, 2013, <http://www.lep.co.uk/news/environment/restored-bus-station-at-half-the-price-1-5815453>.

<sup>111</sup> Leach, *What is Architectural History?*, 127ff.

<sup>112</sup> See Cornelius Holtorf and Anders Högborg, “Contemporary Heritage and the Future,” in Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 509-523.